

CFP/AAC: Journée d'étude "The Somatics of Bhanu Kapil's Emigrant/Immigrant Line."
February 14, 2025, Université de Haute Alsace-Campus Illberg, Mulhouse, France

"It is arrival in reverse to approach an ocean. Are you an immigrant? Don't panic, immigrant. There are places to curl up in under a cliff, in a cave, and in the morning you will be covered with starfish opening and closing all over your body. Encrusted, riveted, bright orange, what will you do? What will you do with your new body? What will you make it do?" –Kapil, *Incubation* (80)

The goal of this one day symposium is to, in the presence of the author, begin positing what a critical poetics of Bhanu Kapil¹'s writings with a focus on issues of migration might look like. This is, however, to take migration as both physical and stylistic, including literary migration between forms and formats of expression. For example, how *Incubation: A Space for Monsters* could be read as a mode of re-visiting Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* or even rewriting it from the point of view of the cyborg herself, why filming then writing in the location of the "Bengali Wolf Girls" gave rise to *Humanimal: A Project for Future Children*, or how, in *Ban en Banlieue*, a parallel arises in her many notes/instructions and the moments of placing her body (à la Ana Mendieta) in a space, tracing it, filling that trace with flowers, examining the red flowers wilting and locating in that cycle of life/death "A book of time, for time and because of it./A book for recovery from an illness. A book that repeats a sentence until that sentence recuperates its power to attract, or touch, other sentences./ A book as much poetry as it is a forbidden or unfunded area of research."

The body and the written word have always been intimately, intrinsically linked in Kapil's works. Foregoing the declarative, the stable, the conclusive, Kapil's writing has always been a form of open-ended interrogation, including works that even emerge from asking others, and herself, a series of questions over and over, as in her first book *Vertical Interrogation of Strangers*. Kapil invites readers to engage, to enter, to be part of her texts. In this day and age, many authors explore hybrid genres and practices which expand into performance then return to the book. Works which defy definition. What Kapil's work does which is unique to this exploration is to deny that any difference between on and off the page, the written the read and the being written exist in any way as separate from the body. The tactile materiality of the world itself and language are one, as her citing of Alfonso Lingis' *Abuses* opens *Humanimal*: "They open up a body that is a lesion in the tissue of words and discourses and the network of powers". As Kapil explains quite directly in an interview: "I want a form that [...] lets the sentence be the place where the dirt, or fractal matter, of the diasporic body: might adhere."

This conference will thus deliberately focus on a broad reading of the issues, stylistic aspects and echoes both on and off of the page of Bhanu Kapil's writing and performance work as it relates

¹ **Bhanu Kapil** is the author of six full-length collections: *The Vertical Interrogation of Strangers* (Kelsey Street Press, 2001), *Incubation: a space for monsters* (Leon Works, 2006), *humanimal [a project for future children]* (Kelsey Street Press, 2009), *Schizophrene* (Nightboat, 2011), *Ban en Banlieue* (Nightboat, 2015), and *How to Wash a Heart* (Liverpool University Press, 2020). Two new, non-identical editions of *Incubation* (out of print for seven years in the U.S.) were published by Prototype (UK) and Kelsey Street Press (USA) in 2023. Bhanu is based now in Cambridge, where she is an Extraordinary Fellow of Churchill College, thinking and writing [with] [near] [beneath] the archive of Enoch Powell. She has been awarded a Cholmondeley Award, a Windham-Campbell Prize and the T.S. Eliot Prize. For twenty years, she taught seminars in experimental writing, performance, and ritual at Naropa University. Current manuscripts include a novel, *The Secret Garden*, and an unpublished work of creative non-fiction, *Promiscuity*. (Source: Bio taken from *Poets & Critics* <https://www.poetscritics.org/> who organized a 2 day seminar-discussion and reading with Kapil in Paris in Nov 2024. Some of the organizers from this event will share the findings and outcome of their seminar with us).

specifically to the somatics of her immigrant/emigrant line. It invites new understandings to probe the more analytic end of Kapil's intertextuality and mobility, including the way it exists in a dialogic space with works across a variety of genres, artistic mediums and themes. We invite contributions on a range of topics, including, but not limited to:

- Questions regarding borders/citizenship and nomadism;
- Tandem issues with the above focusing on emigration/immigration & repatriation;
- Talks which take a specific look at “the experiences of diaspora communities in India, England or America”;
- Issues regarding movement / migration and hitchhiking;
- The body: celebrating and healing it, or its rejection, treatment as “disposable”, in pain;
- The enigmatic in Kapil: and its relationship to understanding, knowledge or inquiry;
- Kapil's work as a form of trauma writing (or post-trauma writing);
- Questions of self-knowledge and definition (or self-annihilation) in Kapil's writing;
- The topic of mind-body (care, health, attention, definition, etc.);
- Scars of language and body alongside notions of narratives as potential modes for healing (both as read and written);
- Feminist issues in Kapil;
- Kapil's relationship to the (inside-out) Feminist Cyborg theories of Donna Haraway and (outside-in) cognitive science-based cyborg theories of Andy Clark.
- Kapil's works as fictional (auto)biography;
- Questions of otherness and monstrosity and/or Cyborgs in Kapil;
- the response to folklore in Kapil's work;
- Reflections on Kapil's reinventions of genre, or even a perceived progression in her work;
- The interrogation of other (and self) in Kapil's works;
- How the political and the artist coincide;
- Kapil's works as forms of metamorphosis;
- Topics of memory and temporality in Kapil;
- Intermedial methodologies in her oeuvre (on and off the page);
- Racism and violence in Kapil's writing;
- Hospitality and community vs assimilation;
- Writing as a mode of healing;
- (Linguistic study of) metaphors and/or imagery in Kapil's work;
- The use and significance of specific colors in Kapil's works;
- Writing as a mode of becoming; writing towards girlhood;
- Embodied cognition in Kapil's works;
- Kapil's books as radical forms of travelogue.

Proposals (ca. 300-500 words) for 30-minute papers and a brief biographical note should be sent to jennifer-kay.dick@uha.fr by **10 December 2024**. We welcome experimental or creative-critical approaches to papers. The committee will communicate their decisions by 16 December 2024. Contributions will be considered for inclusion in a peer-reviewed volume or special issue of a journal. This one-day symposium is organized by the ILLE research lab and the English Department of UHA.

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